

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend the claims as shown in the following Listing of Claims.

1. **(previously presented)** A rake comprising, in combination:  
a head;  
an elongate handle extending from the head;  
a plurality of parallel, spaced-apart, flexible tines extending from the head opposite the handle;  
a brace movable along the tines between first and second positions to change effective stiffness of the flexible tines;  
a locking device selectively operable to releasably secure the brace to the head in each of the first and second positions to prevent movement of the brace relative to the tines;  
wherein the brace moves relative to the handle as the brace moves between the first and second positions; and  
wherein spacing between the tines remains unchanged as the brace moves between the first and second positions.
2. **(original)** The rake according to claim 1, wherein each of the tines extend through separate openings formed in the brace.
3. **(original)** The rake according to claim 2, wherein each of the tines has a rearwardly extending rib such that the tines are generally T-shaped in cross-section.
4. **(original)** The rake according to claim 3, wherein each of the openings are generally T-shaped in cross-section.
5. **(original)** The rake according to claim 1, wherein the head and tines are unitarily molded of plastic.
6. **(original)** The rake according to claim 1, wherein the head is molded of plastic and the tines are formed of metal.

7. **(original)** The rake according to claim 1, wherein the locking device includes interlocking protrusions and grooves formed in the head and the brace.

8. **(previously presented)** The rake according to claim 1, wherein the locking device is selectively operable to releasably secure the brace to the head at locations between the first and second positions to prevent movement of the brace relative to the tines.

9. **(original)** The rake according to claim 1, wherein the locking device comprises a knob and rotation of the knob locks and unlocks the locking device.

10. **(original)** The rake according to claim 1, wherein the tines are unremovable from the head.

11. **(original)** The rake according to claim 1, wherein the handle extends to the tines.

12. **(original)** The rake according to claim 11, wherein the head includes a socket at the tines and a support forming a passage extending through the support and spaced apart from the socket, and wherein the handle extends through the passage and into the socket.

13. **(cancelled)**

14. **(cancelled)**

15. **(previously presented)** The rake according to claim 12, wherein the head, socket and support are unitarily molded of plastic.

16. **(previously presented)** The rake according to claim 12, wherein the support is generally cylindrical shaped.

17. **(cancelled)**

18. **(cancelled)**

19. (cancelled)

20. (currently amended) A leaf rake comprising, in combination:

a head;

an elongate handle extending from the head;

a plurality of parallel, spaced-apart, flexible tines extending from the head opposite the handle;

wherein the flexible tines extend from the head substantially parallel to the handle;

a brace movable along the tines between first and second positions to change effective stiffness of the flexible tines; and

wherein the plurality of flexible tines resiliently deflect when moved over non-uniform ground surfaces to form a plurality contours substantially conforming to the ground surfaces and the brace is resiliently flexible so that the brace conforms to the plurality of contours of the plurality of flexible tines;

a locking device selectively operable to releasably secure the brace to the head in each of the first and second positions and at locations between the first and second positions to prevent movement of the brace relative to the tines;

wherein the handle is secured to the head to prevent relative movement therebetween as the brace moves between the first and second positions; and

wherein spacing between the tines remains unchanged as the brace moves between the first and second positions.

21. (previously presented) The rake according to claim 20, wherein the brace moves relative to the handle as the brace moves between the first and second positions.

22. (previously presented) The rake according to claim 20, wherein the handle is directly secured to the head.

23. (previously presented) The rake according to claim 1, the handle is secured to the head to prevent relative movement therebetween as the brace moves between the first and second positions.

24. **(previously presented)** The rake according to claim 1, wherein the handle is directly secured to the head.

25. **(new)** The rake according to claim 1, wherein the locking device is selectively operable to releasably secure the brace to the head in each of the first and second positions to prevent movement of the brace relative to the tines without a user holding the locking device.

26. **(new)** The rake according to claim 20, wherein the locking device is selectively operable to releasably secure the brace to the head in each of the first and second positions to prevent movement of the brace relative to the tines without a user holding the locking device.

27. **(new)** The rake according to claim 1, wherein the rake is a leaf rake and the flexible tines extend from the head substantially parallel to the handle.

28. **(new)** The rake according to claim 1, wherein the rake is a leaf rake, the plurality of flexible tines resiliently deflect when moved over non-uniform ground surfaces to form a plurality contours substantially conforming to the ground surfaces, and the brace is resiliently flexible so that the brace substantially conforms to the plurality of contours of the plurality of flexible tines.

29. **(new)** A leaf rake comprising, in combination:

a head;

an elongate handle extending from the head;

a plurality of parallel, spaced-apart, flexible tines extending from the head opposite the handle;

wherein the flexible tines extend from the head substantially parallel to the handle;

a brace movable along the tines between first and second positions to change effective stiffness of the flexible tines;

wherein the brace moves relative to the handle as the brace moves between the first and second positions; and

wherein spacing between the tines remains unchanged as the brace moves between the first and second positions.

that the brace can be

30. (new) The rake according to claim 29, wherein the plurality of flexible tines resiliently deflect when moved over non-uniform ground surfaces to form a plurality contours substantially conforming to the ground surfaces and the brace is resiliently flexible so that the brace substantially conforms to the plurality of contours of the plurality of flexible tines.

30. (new) The rake according to claim 29, wherein the plurality of flexible tines resiliently deflect when moved over non-uniform ground surfaces to form a plurality contours substantially conforming to the ground surfaces and the brace is resiliently flexible so that the brace substantially conforms to the plurality of contours of the plurality of flexible tines.

30. (new) The rake according to claim 29, wherein the plurality of flexible tines resiliently deflect when moved over non-uniform ground surfaces to form a plurality contours substantially conforming to the ground surfaces and the brace is resiliently flexible so that the brace substantially conforms to the plurality of contours of the plurality of flexible tines.